

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 7TH APRIL 2004

REPORT OF THE LEISURE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mrs Bradley)

This report addresses the corporate priorities of Environment, Economy and Health

DEVELOPMENT OF A GREENSPACES STRATEGY FOR THE BOROUGH

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Greenspaces in the Borough are a valuable asset for the Council in addressing its priorities of Environment, Economy and Health. A strategic approach to their provision and management is vital if this role is to be maximised and this is now actively being encouraged by Government.

2. Purpose of the Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Members of the Executive, the methodology used for the development of a Greenspaces Strategy for the Borough, the key findings and the draft recommendations arising. There will be a presentation by the Consultant and an opportunity for discussion about the method and outcomes. The full draft strategy is available in the Members' Room.

2.2 The Health and Leisure Panel considered this report and approved the strategy in principle. There was debate at the Panel meeting about the priorities allocated to the recommendations but no consensus. The officers will be developing a draft Action Plan from the recommendations with a time schedule, which will be discussed by the Health and Leisure Panel. The final Action Plan agreed by Panel Members will be recommended to the Executive Councillor for Leisure for approval.

3. Background

3.1 The Council commissioned the Communities First Partnership in late 2002 to assist it with the development of a Greenspaces Strategy.

3.2 The need for this document arose from four sources:

- The publication of "PPG17" the revised planning guidance note on recreational provision;
- the Parks Service Best Value Inspection and resulting Improvement Plan;
- the publication of the Government's Taskforce report "Greenspaces, Better Places";
- the outcome of the assessment of the Parks Service against the ILAM Quality standard.

3.3 The strategy development process was reported to Members on 3rd October 2002 for approval.

4. The Development of the Strategy

4.1 The work has been in considerable depth and has taken over a year. It has involved frontline and policy staff working together. The project has:

- fundamentally assessed the amount, type and quality of greenspaces available to the community,
- ascertained the views of the community on those spaces and on the service provided by the Parks team,
- assessed the current policy position of the Council and the Government about greenspaces,
- ascertained the views and perceptions of Council and DLO officers, and
- included a review of the Parks Service itself.

4.2 The recommendations arising from the work so far are grouped under the broad headings of:

- strategic direction,
- design of the service,
- resource allocation,
- addressing consultation outcomes and
- maintenance issues.

4.3 The following tables set out the draft recommendations for the Parks and Open Space Strategy. These recommendations are grouped by the following headings and listed by proposed priority order:

- Strategic Direction
- Design of the Service
- Resource Allocation
- Addressing Consultation Issues
- Maintenance Issues

Strategic Direction

Recommendation	Details	Lead Service	Partners	Proposed Priority Rating	Resource Implications
R1	The regeneration of existing green space and the creation of new spaces need to be tied in to the findings of this strategy.	Parks Service	Planning Service, Police, Youth Service, Community Safety Unit	High	Additional resources or refocused resources needed
R2	Local plan policies should be reviewed in light of the findings of this strategy.	Planning Service	Parks Service	High	None
R3	The planning authority needs to develop a clear framework and rationale (Supplementary Planning Guidance) for the consideration of on site and off site provision of green space and children's play.	Planning Service	Parks Service	High	None
R4	The parks service needs to review its 2002-04 service plan in the light of this strategy and the findings of the Best Value Review and ILAM Quality Award.	Parks Service		High	None
R5	The findings of this strategy need to be fed in to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy and community safety initiatives.	Parks Service	Community Safety Unit	Medium	None

Design of the Service

Recommendation	Details	Lead Service	Partners	Proposed Priority Rating	Resource Implications
R6	The authority needs to carry out a feasibility study for the Tree Town of The South West Concept	Landscape and Heritage Service	Parks Service, Highways, Landscape and Heritage Service	Medium	Additional resources needed
R7	The authority should begin a programme of producing management plans for all its key sites.	Parks Service		Medium	Refocussed resources needed
R8	The authority should consider extending its programme of applications to the Green Flag Award.	Parks Service		Medium	None
R9	The authority should consider repeating the quality audit undertaken as part of the strategy on an annual basis.	Parks Service		Medium	Additional resources or refocused resources needed
R10	The authority needs to improve its work on marketing and promotion	Parks Service		Medium	Refocused resources needed
R11	The authority needs to consider how it can work with town and parish councils to improve their quality of provision	Parks Service	Parish and Town Councils	Medium	Additional resources or refocused resources needed
R12	Undertake a skills and resources audit to identify shortfalls in skills needed to deliver the strategy	Parks Service		Medium	None
R13	Environmental policy should be developed to bring together all aspects of this work across all types of greenspace and the services that manage them.	Parks Service		Low	None
R14	The current or potential nature conservation benefit of greenspace has not been assessed and thought should be given to this.	Parks Service	Landscape and Heritage Service	Low	None

Resource Allocation

Recommendation	Details	Lead Service	Partners	Proposed Priority Rating	Resource Implications
R15	Consider how to increase resources and how to redesign the service to release resources for the priorities identified in the strategy	Parks Service		High	Additional resources needed
R16	The authority needs to consider how it can create a focus for parks management on key sites.	Parks Service		Medium	None

Addressing Consultation Outcomes

Recommendation	Details	Lead Service	Partners	Proposed Priority Rating	Resource Implications
R17	A multi agency approach is needed to address safety and provision for young people in green spaces.	Parks Service	Planning Service, Police, Youth Service, Community Safety Unit	High	Additional resources or refocused resources needed
R18	The authority needs to explore how it will increase staff presence on site.	Parks Service		High	Additional resources or refocused resources needed
R19	The authority needs to address dog fouling in parks and green spaces.	Parks Service	Environmental Health, Community Safety Unit	High	None
R20	Early sites to be targeted for a community led approach to development would be Victoria Park and French Weir.	Parks Service	Police, Youth Service, Community Safety Unit	Medium	Additional resources needed

Maintenance Issues

Recommendation	Details	Lead Service	Partners	Proposed Priority Rating	Resource Implications
R21	Carry out a survey of all newly planted trees and producing a programme of remedial works	Parks Service		Low	None
R22	Develop a regular programme of tree maintenance for all recently planted and young trees	Parks Service		Low	None
R23	Survey shrub beds and undertake a programme weed removal, mulching, formative pruning and, where appropriate, wholesale removal and replanting.	Parks Service		Low	None
R24	Review its operations in terms of the cleansing and upkeep of children's play areas	Parks Service		Low	None

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Greenspaces Strategy took as its starting premise that all recommendations would be achievable without additional cost to the Council. In practice this will be achieved in a number of ways:
- by refocusing existing resources away from current activities to the new activities R20;
 - by seeking funding from external sources eg R18;
 - by combining the activity with other resourced activities within the Council eg R15.
- 5.2 Should it transpire that additional resources are required for any of the actions in the plan which cannot be resourced by the refocussing of existing budgets then this would be presented as a development bid and the adoption of the strategy would not be seen as an automatic permission to incur additional expenditure.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that Members adopt Strategy for Greenspaces and approve the drafting of an action plan to deliver the recommendations.

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